

## THE RELATIVE POSITION OF EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYED.

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"Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal."

"Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart."

According to this authority it will be seen that the interests of employer and employed are co-equal. Although it has been often asserted that the rights of the employer and the employed are in direct antagonism, and from the nature of things this must often appear so, it does not follow that they must be hostile, as each individual has to earn his living and a living for his family whether he be an employer or be employed. The employee desires to sell his labor in the highest market, and the employer wishes to buy his labor in the lowest market, it is simply each individual trying to secure the best bargain. Yet withal their interests are to a certain extent mutual as the employer's success depends upon the capability and physical condition of his workmen, and the workmen depends upon the success and financial condition of his employer so as to sell his labor and secure a living.

The question arises, what are "wages"? The answer is very simple and must be settled upon the principles of equity, as the employer who takes labor from any one without just recompense is guilty of theft, and similarly a laborer who takes wages from any individual, a company, or a state, without giving value received, is guilty of the same crime. This is a natural conclusion and cannot be otherwise, for if there were no correct system of wages there would be no impetus for work, if the state owed us our living and gave it to us we would be encouraged to indolence. But the state does not owe any one his living. It simply

owes to him the condition whereby he can earn his living, and no individual has the right to get his living from any one except through his physical or mental labors. Now with these conditions existing, two classes are naturally evolved, viz.: employers and employed. As the interests of each party are co-equal, it would seem necessary that an agreement be reached wherein both parties may get along in harmony and not infringe upon each others' rights. This agreement can best be reached by the organization of both employers and employed, but not with the object of compelling either party to submit to any arbitrary demands and leading to lockouts or strikes, which are productive only of injury to all concerned and are a menace to social order and good government.

The first trade union was formed in England about the middle of the eighteenth century. It was then formed as a necessity on account of the alarming degradation existing among the working classes, the object of trades unions being to improve and protect the interests of the workmen and in particular to raise the rate of wages.

Some political economists have maintained that this is impossible, as only a certain amount of capital is laid aside to be paid in wages. If labor is plentiful the divisor will be all the larger and consequently the individual laborer will receive the less. If labor is scarce the divisor will be smaller, which will give him all the more. This is a mistaken idea as labor is paid from what is produced and capital advances to labor its share knowing that it will be returned when the product is sold. Labor is simply a commodity which is bought and sold, but with this difference, that the seller of a manufactured commodity can withhold the sale of the article if the price is too low, but when the laborer puts his labor upon the market he must sell it, as it is the only means whereby he can live. He as an individual offering his labor for sale is compelled to take just whatever the market may offer, and consequently there may be reductions of wages which will bring cut-throat competition and general demoralization to employer and employed.

Trade's unions in the past have in a great many cases been very arbitrary. They have tried to compel employers to submit to very unreasonable demands and have generally suffered there-

for themselves. The true and only method whereby the trades union can raise wages to increase the amount and efficiency of the product.

Restriction of the amount of work is wrong morally and ethically and is in opposition to the advancement of the country and the law of the "Survival of the fittest." I believe that a workman should receive all that he earns and no more. If only a proper system of piece work could be arranged so that when a good mechanic produced a piece of work he would receive a stated price. Unfortunately some employers will continually reduce prices irrespective of the profits which they are receiving and consequently workmen are compelled to band together in order to protect themselves. Hence comes the tendency of trades unions going to excess in their demands and in the restrictions which they have unwisely put upon production.

Adam Smith says that "The source of wealth is labor." "The amount of labor of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes." With this knowledge in mind it would be well for the employer and his workmen to co-operate and bring forth a higher class of labor with more enthusiasm, greater economies, and higher productive power. Every man in a spirit of emulation doing his best, as a soldier dare not be a coward but goes forward with a will in order to reach the highest goal. Therefore let every American employer and his workmen remember that their interests are co-equal, and with the freedom which is granted in this great country there should be no limit to the amount of good which can be produced in the elevation of both parties morally and physically.